

Pregnancy Q&A and Pandemic H1N1 Influenza

What is the concern about the flu and pregnancy?

Pregnant women are more likely to get sick than others and have more serious problems with any flu due to metabolic changes going on in your body during the pregnancy. These problems include preterm labor and severe pneumonia. Pregnant women with existing medical problems such as asthma, hypertension, or diabetes are at higher risk for severe complications from the flu. Pregnant women are encouraged to get the influenza vaccine each flu season. When the vaccine for pandemic H1N1 influenza becomes available, all pregnant women and women planning on getting pregnant should get the H1N1 vaccine.

Symptoms of pandemic H1N1 influenza

- Fever/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Headache
- Body aches
- Vomiting and diarrhea may also be present

What should I do if I get sick?

- If you get sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home, limit contact with others. Take Tylenol for fever, wash your hands often with soap and water, and cover your mouth when you cough.
- Call your doctor within two days if you have mild symptoms of the flu. Call your doctor immediately if you have a high fever, productive cough, and shortness of breath, pain or pressure in your chest or abdomen, decreased or no movement from the baby. Your doctor may do a nasal swab to test for the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus. Your doctor may prescribe an antiviral medicine that will fight against the flu and make your symptoms milder. If you do not have a doctor and you are pregnant, go to the emergency department or immediate care clinic. If you cannot afford to pay for the medicines the doctor prescribes for you, tell the doctor. He may be able to give you free samples.
- Drink extra fluids to replace what you will lose from coughing, fever, and runny nose. Pregnant women are at risk of becoming dehydrated with the flu and dehydration can cause preterm labor.
- If you live alone and are sick, call someone and ask them to check on you every day to make sure you have what you need and that you are not getting seriously ill.

How can I protect myself from getting the flu?

- If there is pandemic H1N1 influenza virus in your community, avoid crowded places. Stock up on household and health supplies such as water, acetaminophen, and food.

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